

Message Text

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44

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-01 AID-05 IO-10 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01 /075 W

----- 020227

R 220927Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4852

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF, LA, TH

SUBJ: PGNU CONCERN REGARDING LAO REFUGEES IN THAILAND

1. SECRETARY OF STATE FOR MFA, DR. KITHONG VONGSAY, ASKED ME TO COME IN ON DIRECTION FROM PRIME MINISTER AT LAST CABINET MEETING. PRIME MINISTER WANTED TO ASK US ABOUT THE ARTICLE IN THE JULY 15 BANGKOK POST ALLEGING THAT THE U.S. HAD PROVIDED 150 MILLION DOLLARS FOR LAO REFUGEES IN THAILAND. I FLATLY DENIED THE STORY. WE WERE NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED. I ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE RTG HAD HAD CONVERSATIONS WITH US ON THE SUBJECT BUT MY IMPRESSION WAS THAT THE MATTER WOULD BE HANDLED MORE IN AN INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK, PROBABLY THROUGH THE UNHCR.

2. KITHONG WAS RELIEVED TO HEAR OUR DENIAL BUT SAID THERE WERE MANY STORIES REGARDING THESE REFUGEES. THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAD "GOOD INFORMATION" TO THE EFFECT THAT THERE WAS A GOVERNMENT IN EXILE BEING CREATED IN
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KORAT. I ANSWERED THAT WE HAD NO SUCH INFORMATION BUT

G COULD ASSURE HIM THAT WERE SUCH A "GOVERNMENT" CREATED, IT WOULD RECEIVE NO U.S. SUPPORT. I RECALLED A SMILIAR ALLEGATION MADE BY MINISTER PHOUMI VONGVICHIT SOME WEEKS AGO WHICH WAS QUITE SPECIFIC AND POINTED OUT THAT THE STORY WAS PROVED GROUNDLESS.

3. I MADE POINT THAT RTG'S POLICY WAS TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH ALL ITS NEIGHBORS AND THAT IT WAS ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THESE REFUGEES WHO WERE A SERIOUS BURDEN. I WAS CONVINCED THAT THE RTG WOULD ONLY BE TOO DELIGHTED TO HAVE ALL REFUGEES LEAVE THAILAND. UNFORTUNATELY, HOWEVER, MANY WERE GENUINELY AFRAID OF RETURNING AND I CITED EXAMPLE OF THAI DAM COUPLE WHO HAD WORKED FOR 10 YEARS IN COUNSELOR'S HOUSE AND, DESPITE EFFORTS TO PERSUADE THEM TO STAY, HAD LEFT FOR NONG KHAI. KITHONG SEEMED TO AGREE WITH ALL THESE POINTS BUT INDICATED A GOOD DEAL OF SUSPICION OF THAI MILITARY WHO HE SAID MIGHT SUPPORT A LAO REFUGEE EFFORT AGAINST LAOS. HE SAID THAT SOME OF THE THAI MILITARY WERE TAKING A HARD LINE ON THE PRESENT DISPUTE BETWEEN LAOS AND THAILAND OVER THE MEKONG INCIDENTS. I SIMPLY COMMENTED THAT I DID NOT KNOW WHAT ALL THAI MILITARY THOUGHT BUT IT WAS MY IMPRESSION, AT LEAST, THAT THAI MILITARY GENERALLY SUPPORTED THE RTG'S POLICY.

4. COMMENT: THE PGNU'S INQUIRY EMPHASIZES ITS CONTINUING CONCERN OVER LARGE NUMBER OF LAO REFUGEES IN THAILAND AND IPTLARANOIC BELIEF THAT THEY ARE PLOTTING MISCHIEF AGAINST LAOS. THESE FEARS ARE NOT ENTIRELY GROUNDLESS: THE SON OF THE PRIMIN, MANGKHALA SOUVANNA PHOUMA, WHO IS VERY DEPRESSED BY WHOLE SITUATION, TOLD ME THAT IF EFFORT WERE NOW MADE TO TAKE BACK LAOS, AT LEAST VIENTIANE, A LARGE PART OF THE POPULATION AND STUDENTS WOULD JOIN THE FAR TO THROW OUT THE PATHET LAO. I ANSWERED THAT THIS WOULD BE UTTER FOLLY: IT WOULD LEAD TO SEVERE LOSS OF LIFE AND BRING IN THE VIETNAMESE. HE AGREED RATHER SADLY. I WENT ON TO EMPHASIZE THAT U.S. WOULD IN NO WAY SUPPORT SUCH AN EFFORT. IN ANSWER TO MY FURTHER QUESTION, HE S?AID HE WAS NOT AT ALL SURE THAT SOMETHING WAS NOT COOKING

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("MIJOTE") AMONG THE LAO REFUGEES IN THAILAND. WHILE MANGKHALA IS A GOOD FELLOW, HE IS NOT MATURE, HAS ALWAYS OVERRATED FAR CAPABILITIES AND IS IMPULSIVE. THE FACT THAT HE BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT IS HOWEVER REVEALING OF THE TEMPER OF MANY ELEMENTS HERE WHO ARE INCREASINGLY DISILLUSIONED BY DEVELOPING PATHET LAO CONTROLS AND RESULTING SITUATION.

CHAPMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEE RELIEF, PRESS COMMENTS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: johnsorg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975VIENTI04943
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750252-0793
From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750731/aaaabchi.tel
Line Count: 115
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: johnsorg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 JUL 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <18 NOV 2003 by johnsorg>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PGNU CONCERN REGARDING LAO REFUGEES IN THAILAND
TAGS: SREF, LA, TH, US, (KITHONG VONGSAY)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006